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Title: **The Battle for Sunday: Missionary Work and the Basotho in the Gold Mine Compounds, 1920-1940.**

by: **Eddy Maloka**

No **365**

THE BATTLE FOR SUNDAY: MISSIONARY WORK AND THE BASOTHO IN THE GOLD MINE COMPOUNDS, 1920-1940.

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Missionary and evangelical work among the Africans in the mine compounds took place on Sundays, Good Friday, Boxing, Christmas and New Year's days, when African mine workers in the compounds were allowed a whole day's rest. Attempts by missionaries to have workers come to their religious services on these days, had to face competition from other leisure options that the workers had. This study is going to focus on the activities of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) among the Basotho in the mine compounds. It will attempt to go beyond looking at religion and the working class simply in terms of the role that the church played in instilling workers with an industrial ethic; there is a need to also look at the dynamics of proselytisation and conversion in the compounds, and the importance that religion had for the miners.[1]

Before proceeding, it is important to make some few comments about sources which are in the main from the PEMS itself. The three key published sources are the PEMS newspaper Leselinyana la Lesotho (Little Light from Lesotho), and its periodicals Journal des Missions Evangeliques (JME) and the Basutoland Witness (BW). JME was targeted at the European, particularly the French, audience, while the BW and Leselinyana were for local distribution. Leselinyana in the Sesotho language, was not aimed at potential financial donors as was the case with the two journals (especially JME), but was more for evangelising its readership. Issues are presented in such a way that they appeal and emotionally move the reader, be s/he "heathen', convert or a donor. The commencing of PEMS work on the Rand coincided with a serious financial crisis for the Society. The work on the Rand, sensationalised as it was, was, as it will be seen, presented as a God-ordained adventure in the midst of Babylon,

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[1]. Pioneering studies on religion and African mine workers in Southern Africa tended to focus on the relationship between workers' religious beliefs and their industrial militancy. See, for example, Van Onselen, C, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933, (Pluto Press, London, 1976, pp.184-86, 204-09); Perring, C, Black Mineworkers in Central Africa: Industrial Strategies and the Evolution of an African Proletariat in the Copperbelt, 1914-41, (Heinemann, London,1979, pp.214-17). Patrick Harries in his Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c.1860-1910, (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1994, pp.213-222), is attempting to look at the significance that religion had for African miners.

as a "national" campaign to "save" and "protect" the children of Moshoeshoe (the founder of the Basotho nation) from moral and cultural downfall, and return them home. Such a tone is absent in the private correspondences of some of PEMS' missionaries who worked on the Rand; their concern tended to be around family matters, and gossip about their colleagues. The only key source not controlled by the PEMS is a Basotho-controlled, Sesotho newspaper, Mochochonono (The Comet); the paper was a platform for the nascent, disgruntled Basotho middle-class, and was sometimes used to attack the PEMS.[2]

I

Missionary work in the gold mine compounds proliferated after the South African War (1899-1902). When the PEMS arrived on the scene in the 1920s, about 26 missionary societies were already operating on the Reef, compared with 14 in 1912. Already by 1904 over 18 000 Africans in the Witwatersrand were in one way or another associated with Christian churches. In 1926 over 26% of Africans in South Africa (about 1 million) was said to be Christian, and a generation later, in 1946, the figure had doubled to 52.6%.[3]

It appears as if the most systematic and focused work in the gold mine compounds prior to the South African War was conducted by A.W. Baker (who had abandoned his law practice for evangelical work), with his South African Compound Mission, founded in 1896. Concerned that "something should be done for the heathen who were being demoralised by strong drink and cardplaying, and other vices of civilization",[4] he managed to get a building site at the City and Suburban Gold Mine, and conducted his daily visits of the compounds from there. He was later joined in the same year, 1896, by Enerst Mabille, the son of Adolphe Mabille, who had been expelled from the PEMS in Lesotho in 1894 for adultery with his Mosotho servant. Within two years, Baker's Compound Mission had

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[2]. PEMS missionaries' private correspondences are in microfiche at the South African Library, but only cover the period 1827 to 1935.

[3]. Harries, P, Work, Culture and Identity,p.213; Gaitskell, D, "Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women's Christianity in South Africa", in Walker, C, (ed.), Women and Gender in South Africa, (David Philip, Cape Town, 1990), p.253; Gaitskell, "Female Mission Initiatives: Black and White Women in Three Witwatersrand Churches, 1903-1939", (Ph.D, University of London, 1981), p.6.

[4]. Baker, A.W, Grace Triumphant: The Life Story of a Carpenter, Lawyer and Missionary in South Africa from 1856 to 1939 (Glasgow, 1939), p.101.

expanded its activities to four other mines, establishing halls, schools and cottages, and visiting regularly compounds and hospitals in the neighbourhood.[5] When Rev. N. Jaques of the Swiss mission arrived in Johannesburg in 1904 to begin his society's work among the Shangaan in the compounds, he went to Mabille who was now working for the Native Affairs Department in addition to his Sunday religious work. Mabille introduced him to mineowners and assisted him getting a site for a church at Village Main - a central point along the Reef.[6]

The PEMS began its work in Lesotho in 1833, and was followed by the Catholics in 1862 and the Anglicans in 1876. Despite the Basotho reaction against missionaries during and after wars with the Boers and British in the 1850s and the Cape colonial administration in the 1870s, the PEMS managed to style itself as the "Church of Moshoeshoe" or, rather, a "national" church. This myth was seriously and successfully challenged on the ground by the Catholics with their tolerance of Basotho traditional practices and of the chieftaincy. In 1912 Griffith became the first Sotho Paramount Chief to convert to Catholicism, and by 1936 the Catholic church membership had outstripped that of the PEMS. Much of the Catholic progress against the PEMS occurred in the 1920s. But the bulk of the Basotho were still "heathen" for the most part of the period under review. Over half of the church membership of the three major denominations in Lesotho prior to World War II were women.[7]

PEMS' movement to the Rand was not simply due to concern with Basotho in the compounds, but was also a reflection of the crisis and challenges it was facing in Lesotho. Its hope of maintaining a monopoly over the evangelisation of Basotho was not only challenged by the Catholics, but had to deal also with the apostolic break-away groups within its ranks. The most

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[5]. Baker, Grace Triumphant, p.101-114; Bulletin de la Mission Suisse Romande, (1896-97), p.219-20; Central Archives Depot (SAB), E.H. Mabille's "Claim for Compensation", RAD 160, 4025-4062; Kunene, D.P, Thomas Mofolo and the Emergence of Written Sesotho Prose, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1989), p.33; Harries, Work, Culture, p.213.

[6]. Bulletin, 1904, p.38, and 1905, p.86; Leselinyana la Lesotho, 1 November 1929.

[7]. Mohapeloa, J.M, From Mission to Church: Fifty Years of the Work of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the Lesotho Evangelical Church, 1933-1983, (Morija Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1985), p.2-3; Gill, S.J, A Short History of Lesotho: From the Late Stone Age until the 1993 Elections, (Morija Museum and Archives, Morija, 1993), p.173; Kennedy, B, "Missionaries, Black Converts, and Separatists on the Rand, 1886-1910: From Accommodation to Resistance", Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, (vol.20, no.2, May 1992, p.196-222), p.199. For figures on religious and denominational affiliation of Basotho, see Basutoland Government, Census, 1911, 1936 and 1946.

significant of these movements was that led by one of PEMS' evangelists Walter Matita, who was dismissed from his duties in 1922 for making messianic claims, and left to set up his own "Church of Moshoeshoe". Other apostolic or zionist sects were already in operation in the country, introduced from the urban areas mainly by the returning miners. The other challenge to the PEMS came from a radical political organisation Lekhotla La Bafo (Council of Commoners) founded in 1919, with its attacks on missionaries as agents of colonialism and of the destruction of the Basotho social fabric.[8] Therefore, PEMS' expansion to the Rand was intended to give it access to a category of Basotho (i.e. the men) that was the most difficult to win in Lesotho.

Religious work which was conducted in the compounds by African miners themselves, was equally important. Individual Basotho converts in the mining areas had been trying in one way or another before the arrival of the PEMS, to group together fellow Christians in their compounds for prayer and religious services, even trying to produce converts among the "heathens". Many of these wrote letters to Leselinyana, celebrating progress in their work - be it in Kimberley, Koffyfontein or Johannesburg - but lamenting the absence of assistance from white missionaries. Sometimes, the latter conducted services in Zulu, Shangaan, Xhosa, Tswana or English, alienating Basotho. Unlike the PEMS, Catholics and Anglicans were already established on these mining areas some time before the South African War, but their work was predominantly directed at whites; even their work among Africans was not restricted to the Basotho.[9]

But missionaries such as Baker, Mabille, the Swiss and the Methodist, were often invited by these independent units in the compounds to conduct Christmas and Easter services, baptisms, or the Holy Communion, as participants felt that none of their companions had the religious sanction to do so. Ordinary religious feasts and festivals, after-service money collections, literacy classes, mutual support in the case of accident or death, and so forth, could happen without the assistance of white missionaries. Membership to these units transcended ethnic and language barrier; many Africans could speak more than one language and often acted as interpreters, and the cooperation between, for example, the Swiss who targeted the Shangaan, Baker who spoke Zulu, and Mabille who spoke Sesotho, meant in practice

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[8]. Martin, M-L, The Biblical Concept of Messianism and Messianism in Southern Africa, (Morija Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1964), p.118-19; Gill, Short History, p.173-78; Edgar, B, Prophets with Honour: A Documentary History of Lekhotla la Bafo, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg), p.16.

[9]. Leselinyana, (15 July, 1 October, 1 August),1893, (14 January, 3 June), 1911; Mission de la Congregation des Missionaires Oblats de Marie Immaculee, 1893 (p.496 and 507), 1900 (p.201-02), 1939 (p.65); Quarterly Papers, no.118, 25 October 1897, p.113-14; Gaitskell, "Devout Domesticity", 253-57, touches on the history on the Anglicans.

that the Basotho, Zulu and Shangaan could group or be grouped together. A Swiss missionary Enerst Creux, used to visit the Premier Diamond Mine compounds at the turn of the century, and his Shangaan contact, Yohanes Makoubele (sic), headed a school in the compound that he ran with the assistance of some six Basotho, Bapedi and Bakgatla from the Anglican, Lutheran and Wesleyan denominations. This group also held church services together. At Knights Deep the Basotho and Shangaan held their 1916 Christmas service together, amid fears and expectations of a "faction fight" between different groups in the compounds.[10] These initiatives by Africans did not cease with the arrival of the PEMS or the proliferation of missionary societies on the Rand; they continued to act as pioneers and a driving force for the propagation of the gospel in the compounds. Religious work at the Premier Mine was headed by Africans as late as 1928 due to the absence of formal missionary presence, but close contact was established and maintained with the PEMS, Swiss and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). At Dutoitspan in Kimberley in 1937, Basotho Christians were still meeting on their own, and had made arrangements with the Xhosa to hold their services together. A Christian arriving in a compound would first look for his church, finding none, he would either join existing units or set up his own. Later, the unit would strive to establish contact with white missionaries operating in the neighbourhood.[11] White missionaries had no difficulty in asserting themselves over these units; they had some say in the programmes of the units, and provided guidance to the leadership.

II

When the PEMS finally began a process of moving to the Witwatersrand in 1922, it had to build on what Enerst Mabille and the African-run units in the compounds, had been doing. Mabille's work with Baker's Compound Mission stopped with the outbreak of the South African War. After the war he was employed to work at the Pass Office of the Native Affairs Department (NAD). His work involved visiting many compounds, and he was able to use this opportunity to locate and meet many Basotho. He dedicated his Sundays to riding on his bicycle (carrying a few books for sale) to these compounds, especially that belonging to the Johannesburg municipality as many Basotho worked there in preference to the mines. He had been helping Basotho miners from 1896 to send their money home to their relatives; his work in the NAD included this. He was also helping many families in Lesotho

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[10]. Indicating that we should not overemphasise the ethnic compartmentalisation of the African workforce by the mine management, in our study of conflict and control on the mines.

[11]. Leselinyana, 22 January 1915, 22 January 1917, 28 February and 27 April 1928, 18 December 1935, 19 May 1937; Bulletin, 1908, p.150.

to track down their "lost" sons, fathers or husbands on the Reef. When the Swiss missionaries opened their church at Village Main, he arranged with them to share this venue; the Swiss would use the church in the mornings and afternoons for the Shangaans, and he would take over to preach to his Basotho in the afternoons and early evenings. He continued his work until 1916 when he had to leave for France as one of the commanding officers of the Native Labour Contingent. Even there, he never abandoned his Basotho; he would sometimes take some 200 of them to attend a local church and translate from French for them. He was readmitted to the PEMS on his return from France (after decades of demonstrating his piety), and returned to Lesotho, leaving his work at Village Main under the care of his Mosotho assistant. His departure coincided with the arrival of Bertrand Moreillon who was going to conduct an inquiry for the PEMS.[12]

When Moreillon arrived in Johannesburg at the height of the Rand Revolt in February 1922, his mission was not to initiate PEMS' work but, rather, to investigate whether such work was necessary, given the existence of many missionary societies in the area. Basotho on the Rand had been sending their plea to the synod in Lesotho for PEMS missionaries or a missionary - perhaps under the instigation of Enerst Mabille. The latter's departure for France increased this call, and in June 1916 Reverend Jacottet was despatched from Lesotho to the Rand to meet some of these Basotho. After some discussion, it was decided that Basotho on the Rand would fall under the DRC. Many of these were not happy with the decision, preferring the Swiss as they associated the Dutch with the Orange Free State which had taken much of their fertile land in the wars of the mid-1860s. This partly explains why the DRC failed among Basotho miners.[13]

Moreillon received a cold reception from some Basotho converts, (and it is possible that they even refused to cooperate with him). His station at Griqualand East had been handed over to the Glasgow Missionary Society before his coming to the Rand, due to PEMS' financial situation. Basotho saw this as treason and a betrayal of their opposition and fight against reincorporation into South Africa. Some were even asking as late as 1934, what the PEMS was doing on the Rand, while Basotho were fighting against the Union government; to these people those who supported PEMS' mission on the Rand were regarded as traitors! Moreillon nonetheless managed to conduct his inquiry and was reinforced in

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[12]. Journal des Missions Evangeliques (JME), 1929, p.560; Leselinyana, 27 June 1934; Moreillon, B, "My First Three Weeks on the Rand", Basutoland Witness (BW), (vol.4, no.2, March-April 1950), p.19-21; Labarthe, E, "Mission Work in Johannesburg", BW, (no.62, July 1962), p.2; Ellenberger, V, A Century of Mission Work in Basutoland, 1833-1933, (Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1938), p.352-57, is PEMS' official history of the beginning of its work on the Rand, and does not acknowledge the pioneering work of Henry Mabille, possibly because of his expulsion from the church.

[13]. Leselinyana, 16 September 1927, 27 June 1934.

June 1922 by Louis Mabille. They both strongly argued for the establishment of the PEMS on the Rand. Mabille was even more optimistic, hoping that their work there would then spread to Premier Mine, Jagersfontein and Kimberley. He felt that the PEMS needed to take this opportunity which promised to increase the proportion of men in its ranks. Moreover, he feared, their converts were being exposed to bad influences on the Rand, and some of them were even being won over to other churches. As far as money was concerned, he suggested the work be financed from the coffers of the PEMS' branch in Lesotho, contributions from the miners themselves, and collections to be held annually in all PEMS churches in Lesotho. The only responsibility of Paris would be to pay the salary of the white missionary. The DRC and the Swiss promised to put their facilities at the disposal of the PEMS. Mabille thought that their Society would have to use the strategy employed by the Swiss of deploying volunteers, salaried evangelists and an African minister, in addition to a white missionary.[14] The project received sanction, and Moreillon worked for two-and-a-half years before giving over in 1924 to Rene Ellenberger who was to remain on the Rand for two years.

Like Moreillon, Ellenberger had to travel by train or on foot from the East to West of the Rand, in order to reach Basotho in the compounds. His primary task was to prepare ground for putting in place PEMS' permanent mission through studying methods used by other missionary societies. He went to meet the Director of Native Labour and the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) on his arrival, where he was given letters of introduction to Compound Managers. His work was not limited to the estimated 14 800 Basotho in the gold mine compounds in mid-1920s, but also extended to those Basotho in the compounds of the Johannesburg municipality (where he found the American missionaries using the strategy of showing films) and SA Railway. His instructions were to work only among Basotho of Lesotho; and only those in the compounds. This helped in overcoming the problem of language as was encountered by other societies, but his major problem was the distance between different parts of the Rand. From Springs to Randfontein the train took more than three hours to pass 53 stations; he often had to walk for over 30 minutes from the station before reaching some compounds, hence his plea for a car. In 1926, when the first annual collection for the Rand mission was conducted in all PEMS churches in Lesotho, he went to this country to address congregations and meetings from the south to the north, about the plight of Basotho in the compounds and on the Reef. He moved his audience, especially parents, when he sensationally described to them how Basotho men and sons were being daily subjected to evil and bad temptations (especially alcohol and crime) on the Rand, and that the PEMS was there to protect and save these "children" of Lesotho. So moving were his

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[14]. Leselinyana, 27 June 1934; South African Library, Archives of the PEMS (APEMS), Mf. 730 and 759; Mochochonono, 10 October 1934.

speeches that large sums of money were raised, allowing the PEMS to purchase him a bicycle and employ another evangelist.[15]

The first evangelist, Saul Tumisi (himself an ex-miner), was deployed in 1925 at State Mines in Springs in the East Rand, as Basotho were concentrated in that area and in Johannesburg; City Deep, Crown Mines, East Rand and State Mines, each employed over 1000 Basotho. But due to the problem of accommodation, Tumisi had to stay at Ellenberger's place and commute to State Mines, sometimes having to sleep with miners in the compounds. The second evangelist, Elias 'Moleli, arrived a year later and was deployed in the West Rand at Randfontein. A third evangelist, Bethuel Seotsanyane, was to follow in July 1927 and was placed in the house built for Tumisi in the East Rand, and the latter was redeployed at the centre in Johannesburg. These evangelists were allowed to bring along only their wives and leave their children behind as the Rand, they were told, was not a good place for children. By the end of Ellenberger's service in 1927, PEMS had four centres (three run by evangelists and the other one by a volunteer), 14 schools run by volunteers, and 132 catechumens. Books to the value of over L400 (including 156 bibles) had been sold in the compounds.[16] But it is to Louis Mabille that great credit should be given for the work of the PEMS on the Rand.

Unlike Moreillon and Ellenberger who did their work with the intention of retiring at some near future, Mabille had a long term view and could invest his energies in his work. For that matter, Moreillon had gone to Johannesburg for the education of his children, and Ellenberger had retired from his work in Lesotho to finish his father's book on the history of Basotho. The process of setting up a permanent mission was not qualitatively different from what Moreillon and Ellenberger had been doing; Mabille was to continue the strategy of using evangelists and volunteers, but progress on the ground did not, as it will be shown, match his optimism. He was also in a better position as the Morija Book Depot in Lesotho had bought him a car, and the placing of a fourth evangelist in Benoni in 1929 strengthened the position of the PEMS on the East Rand. The strategy which was employed differed from that used by Baker who used to visit the compounds almost daily, playing his harmonium to attract workers around himself, or that of the Salvation Army and the Methodists who used brass bands, or American missionaries who focused on showing comedies and films on nature, in the compounds. PEMS evangelists and the missionary would visit compounds in their respective sectors on Sundays. Permission would be sought from the Compound Manager; indunas or "policeboys", and sometimes Basotho chiefs, used to locate Basotho in the compounds. Often evangelists would move from room to room, inviting Basotho to come to a certain venue in the

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[15]. JME, 1924 (p.206-07), 1926 (p.285 and 558); Leselinyana, 11 July 1934).

[16]. JME, 1925 (p.396-97, and 558) 1927, (p.373-74); Leselinyana, 11 July 1934; APEMS, Mf.730.

compound for a service. After the service the evangelist/missionary would then ask if any of those present wished to give his life to God, if there were any, their names were taken down for a follow-up. Such services would be followed by the sale of books, especially the bible. During the week, as miners were either out on their shifts or asleep, work was focused on visiting hospitals. Parallel to this, those already converted met daily for evening prayers, and for mutual spiritual support, guidance and defense against "evil" temptations. Each evangelist had units such as these operating in several compounds, and as it was shown, a number of such units were independent from the formal control of missionaries. It was also common for an arrangement to be worked out with the Compound Manager to put converts in one room, in order not to mix them with "heathens". The fourth area of work were literacy classes taking place in the rooms in the compounds.[17] The difficulties that faced these schools will be explored later.

The work of the PEMS can not be adequately understood without looking at the role played by evangelists and volunteers. The strategy of using Basotho evangelists, or junior partners of white missionaries, had been in use in Lesotho since the 1860s. At the same time, white missionaries were very cautious in their selection of evangelists as they did not think that Basotho could have the same control, direction and discipline as whites, thus evangelists were closely monitored. The PEMS had committed itself in Lesotho to transforming itself into a "native" church, producing its first Mosotho minister in 1891. But the achievement of this goal was delayed by the combination of this paternalism with racism; Basotho minister had to work under the supervision of white missionaries. Another indicator is that evangelists to the Rand were not allowed to bring along their children until the 1933 drought in Lesotho, while Mabille had the luxury of finding schools for his children (who had been in France) in Johannesburg. For that matter, decisions around the activities and objectives of the Society continued to be taken by a white-only annual Conference of missionaries until when it was dissolved in 1964, instead of the Synod where Basotho ministers were allowed (and the President of the Conference was automatically the head of the Synod). The process of transforming PEMS into a "native" church was only completed in 1964 when the Lesotho Evangelical Church replaced it.[18]

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[17]. Baker, Grace Triumphant, p.101; Coplan, D.B, In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985), p.46; JME, 1928, (p.84-90 and 145), 1942-45, (p.129-32); Phillips, R.E, The Bantu are Coming: Phases of South Africa's Race Problem, (Students' Christian Association of South Africa, Stellenbosch, 1930), p.141-51.

[18]. JME, 1934, p.352; APEMS, Mf.783; Ellenberger, V, Landmarks in the Story of the French Protestant Church in Basutoland During the First Hundred Years of its Existence, 1833-1933, (Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1933), p.14-15 and 27; Mohapeloa, J.M, From Mission to Church: Fifty Years of the Work

The process of selecting evangelists for the Rand does not appear to have been as thorough as it was in Lesotho. Tumisi, the first evangelist, was an ex-miner, and does not appear to have followed any formal theological training as was the case with evangelists in Lesotho. At the same time, it appears as if he was the most trusted and skilled, as he was deployed in Johannesburg - an area which was more complex and where many missionary societies were represented. This Tumisi, however, was later to be at the centre, as it will be shown, of a serious crisis in 1938. But with white missionaries experiencing what they regarded as "bad" conduct of some evangelists (and volunteers), evangelists came to be recruited via the Bible School and the Leloaleng Industrial School in Lesotho. Emphasis was also put on age (possibly with the belief that young men got easily tempted); preference was for middle-aged candidates. Evangelists were the machinery of the mission, the white missionary concentrating on coordinating and monitoring their activities. They were the ones who conducted most of the visits, spoke to and counselled miners about their personal problems, and it was also not uncommon for one of them to be invited to perform a small funeral service for a dead miner. Often, with the missionary, they received letters from families in Lesotho asking them to help locate a "lost" son, brother, father or husband. Like with white missionaries, their members of families, especially wives, had evangelical responsibilities too; Bethual Seotsanyane was assisted in 1938 by his son and daughter to run a small school he had established in Brakpan, while his wife was doing some work among the women in the locations.[19]

Non-salaried volunteers were equally important; they tended to be literate, some had even been to the Bible School in Morija The other volunteers were those sent by the synod in Lesotho; in 1929 Mabille received six of such volunteers. But the most important were full-time miners who dedicated their Sundays to evangelical work. In 1934 there were four of such men in addition to five evangelists; one was a clerk at Croesus near Langlaagte, others a railway officer at Crown Mine, a tailor in Germiston, and it was only the one at Sub-Nigel (south of Springs) who was an ordinary miner. In fact, the fifth evangelist, David Patose, had been working as a volunteer under Tumisi for five years at Geldenhuis near Germiston, before being accepted as an evangelist in 1932.[20]

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of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the Lesotho Evangelical Church, 1933-1983, (Sesuto Book Depot, Morija, 1985), p.41 and 47; Mrs Jaques, "Mission au Rand", Morija Archives (Lesotho).

[19]. Leselinyana, 6 April 1938, 1 August 1934, 25 February 1927, 11 July 1934, 6 April 1938; JME, 1928, p.84-90; Malefane, M, "The Work of the Lord among Basuto People", BW, (vol.3, no.1, January-February 1949), p.5.

[20]. JME, 1929, p.222-27; Leselinyana, 18 July 1934, 12 October 1932.

Besides these formally recognised volunteers, there were the baholo (elders) who were enthusiastic and energetic (many of them young) converts who paid visits to the compounds on their own or accompanied evangelists or the missionary in their work. They were regarded as senior members of the church, and acted as assistants and advisors to evangelists and the missionary. As in Lesotho, they commanded a lot of respect and influence; they could sway the support for an evangelist to his favour or against him. They were even allowed to send representation to the monthly meetings that the missionary held with his evangelists.[21]

Younger volunteers organised themselves into groups of bahlanka (young men). There were three components to the activities of the bahlanka; one activity involved visiting the compounds, preaching from dormitory to dormitory, laying emphasis on such themes as punishment for and deliverance from sin, and the "lost sheep". Their other activity involved constituting themselves into units for the study of the bible, such as the Almanaka based at Croesus in the mid-1930s. The third component, the most entertaining, pertained to choirs that had spread from the PEMS schools in Lesotho in the late 1920s to the locations and the compounds. These choirs were formed by ex-students who were coming to the Rand for one reason or another. The "Rambling Vagabonds" and the "Basutoland Shooting Choir" were reported to be among the most popular Basotho choirs in Sophiatown in 1921. Such choirs would be invited by Basotho of some standing to hold concerts for the miners; one of such concerts took place in February 1926 in a hall at Village Deep, and over L11 was raised. When PEMS opened its new church at State Mine in July 1935, choirs from Brakpan and of the Swiss mission, were invited to perform. Among the most popular Basotho choirs in the compounds during the 1930s were the "Dinare," and the "Roaring Lions" of State Mines near Brakpan. The "Lions" had been around as early as 1926 and were so popular that they were invited in one instance by one Mosotho to perform in Vereeninging. These choirs did not restrict their choice of songs to hymns; it appears as if what brought them a following were some popular secular songs that they were associated with. Concerts provided platform for different choirs to compete; members of the audience would bid with their money for such and such a person/group to sing such and such a song. Choirs and fund-raising concerts or "tea meetings", had been taking place in slums and locations on the Reef since the beginning of the century, introduced from the Eastern Cape and later Natal, by Christian converts.[22]

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[21]. Ellenberger, V, Century of Mission Work, p.182; JME, 1942-45, p.131-32.

[22]. Coplan, In Township Tonight, p.37 and 71-76; JME, 1942-45, p.131-32; Leselinyana, 12 October 1938, 1 June 1938, 23 February 1917, 14 August 1935, 5 February 1936, 16 February 1938, 13 March 1935, 18 March 1921, 26 March 1926, 3 November 1937, 3 March 1937, 12 May 1937, 12 October 1932, 25 May 1938; Mochochonono, 12 September 1934, 13 March 1937.

The bahlanka formalised their structures in their respective compounds during much of the 1930s. The size of some of these bahlanka groups ranged between 16 to 30 members. This process culminated in a two-day meeting in March 1938 in Cleveland where 45 bahlanka delegates from Brakpan, Nigel, Driefontein, Village Main and Cleveland itself, met to discuss a common approach and the coordination of their activities. A nine-person committee was elected which was going to serve as an umbrella body of the affiliates. The new body was going to have its own funds, with each affiliate contributing 10s annually. Members and non-members were going to be allowed to borrow money from this fund. The group resolved to have its own badge which was to distinguish its members from non-members, and each member was to abstain from any alcohol. The group and its affiliates committed themselves to working with evangelists.[23] Therefore, bahlanka structures were not only for spiritual support and bible-reading, but also provided alternative entertainment for the members, and also functioned as self-help associations.

At a formal level, the missionary would meet with his evangelists and representation from baholo once a month at the level of a Consistory, and evangelists met regularly with the volunteers and baholo in their respective sectors. The missionary monitored his evangelists and reprimanded some in some cases, and he also handled all matters relating to relations with other missionary societies and South African authorities. At the bottom of this hierarchy were ordinary church members. But this triangular relationship between the missionary at the apex, and evangelists and volunteers at the bottom, proved to be full with tensions and contradictions.
Competition between evangelists, and between baholo and their evangelists were not uncommon, sometimes even leading to tensions. Mochochonono published a series of anonymous letters in 1934 and again in 1937, attacking baholo and evangelists, accusing them of behaving like chiefs and indunas. When Ellenberger temporarily replaced Louis Mabille who had retired earlier in 1936 due to health problems, his whole efforts were taken up by such allegations; he even refused to be thanked during his farewell function.[24]

By the time of Mabille's retirement, little significant progress had been made. His optimism had been shattered by the non-cooperation of Basotho. He had hoped that the dramatic increase in the number of the Basotho on the mines from 1930, was going to lead to significant increase in PEMS' church membership; what frustrated him most was the progress that the Catholics were making in Lesotho. The number of Basotho in the compounds had climbed from about 20 000 in 1930 to over 30 000 in 1933, and this trend continued in subsequent years following South Africa's abandonment of the gold standard in 1934. But the

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[23]. Leselinyana, 1 June 1938.

[24]. Mochochonono, 12 September 1934, 10 October 1934, 28 November 1934, 3 March 1937, 27 March 1937.

proportion of men in the PEMS churches did not increase significantly, let alone the unsympathetic attitude of those in the compounds. A significant drop in the number of "heathens" in Lesotho only occurred towards the 1940s, and much of this increase in the number of Christians went to the Catholics. One of my informants who worked at New Modderfontein near Benoni in the mid-1930s, was often the only person from his compound who attended Sunday services at the Wesleyan chapel behind the premises of the mine.[25]

Mabille had developed a practice of issuing cards to Basotho returning home, which were supposed to act as letters of introduction for their speedy acceptance into churches in Lesotho. It is unclear how many of such men used these cards. At the time of his retirement he had only six evangelists; among his major achievements were the building of a PEMS church at Village Main in 1933, and two chapels - one in Springs and the other in Randfontein.[26]

Oechsner de Coninck replaced Ellenberger in December 1936, and was unfortunate that his term was to coincide with the most serious crises that the Rand mission was ever to face since its inception. The first crisis began in 1938 when Coninck tried to expel Tumisi who had been labouring for the Society for more than ten years. The problem began with gossiping and allegations between the wife of Coninck on the one hand, and Tumisi's wife on the other. Coninck sided with his wife, fabricated accusations against Tumisi, and expelled him. He did not know, however, how he was going to present this to Tumisi's congregation at Village Main. He then instructed Tumisi to lie that he was volunteering to quit his work because he was incompetent, but the evangelist refused. Tumisi's congregation protested against the decision, some even staging a walk-out the Sunday when a new evangelist was introduced. Mochochonono carried a number of letters, including Tumisi's defence, lashing out at Coninck's decision. The crisis continued for almost a year, but Tumisi was never reinstated.[27] This expulsion of Tumisi in 1938, and another crisis that was to result in serious explosions within the PEMS in the 1940s, threatened the triangular relationship between the missionary, evangelists and volunteers.

Coninck was not fluent in Sesotho, and somehow lacked the skill of handling crisis situations. His problem with the language was somehow a barrier (as Basotho were known to be very proud of

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[25]. Solomon Mosunyane, b.1913, Quthing, 13 July 1993; JME, 1934, vol.2, p.640-41.

[26]. JME, 1931 (p.757), 1933 (p.149-53), 1934, vol.2 (p.640-41), and 1937 (p.182-84); Leselinyana, 18 July 1934; BW, Labarthe, "Mission Work", p.2-5.

[27]. Mochochonono, 3 January 1938, 15 January 1938, 28 May 1938, 18 June 1938, 2 July 1938; Leselinyana, 12 December 1938.

their language[28]), and his careless handling of conflicts created him enemies from the PEMS congregation. He, however, began the process of spreading PEMS beyond the confines of the Reef; he and David Patose (evangelist at Geldenhuise) visited Basotho at Springfield Colliers near Vereeninging in 1938. But the number of the church membership in 1941 was a mere 2 390 in the midst of an estimated figure of 60 000 Basotho working on the Reef. He was reinforced in 1943 with a Mosotho minister, Joshua Selikane, whose independence was delayed until 1945 when he was allowed to establish a second parish. Though the number of evangelists had grown from seven in 1938 to 12 in 1942, the number of centres increased from 14 in 1943 to only 15 six years later, and the six chapels in 1938 remained the same in number for at least four years. Coninck increased the role of baholo and bahlanka quiet significantly, seeking their presence during many of his visits. It appears, however, that this stagnation was overcome in subsequent years, due to African urbanisation and the disintegration of agricultural production in rural Lesotho. By 1962 the PEMS on the Rand was divided into four parishes stretching from the East to the West Rands, and from the north in Pretoria to Klerksdorp in the south and Welkom in the Orange Free State. The white missionary Labarthe was now working with three Basotho ministers. Focus had now shifted away from the compounds to the locations; miners were now expected to attend services in the latter areas, and each evangelist now had a right to a bicycle.[29] More than being related to African urbanisation, this reorientation was rather a result of the relative failure of the work in the compounds.[30] The mission in the locations began with work among the Basotho women who had been flooding the Reef from the 1920s.[31]

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[28]. Basotho were said to be a "self-centred and a proud nation even though they may be far from their country; far out on the Rand they still exercise such pride, and feel that the Church of Basutoland is their Alma Mater. They do not want their sermons to be preached in any other language save Sotho" [Selikane, J.E, " The Church of Basutoland on the Rand", BW, (vol.3, no.1, January-February 1949), p.10].

[29]. JME, 1937 (p.182-84), 1942-45 (p.129-32); Leselinyana, 25 May 1938, Mabille, G, "Missionary Work on the Rand", and Malefane, M, "The Work of the Lord Among Basuto People", BW, (vol.3, no.1, January-February 1949), p.4-7; Labarthe, "Mission Work", p.4; Mrs Jaques, "Mission au Rand", Morija Archives.

[30]. Leselinyana, 25 May 1938; JME, 1937 (p.182-84), 1940-41 (p.158-59), 1942-45 (p.129-32); Mrs Jaques, "Mission au Rand"; Mabille, G, "Missionary Work on the Rand", BW, (vol.3, no.1, January-February 1949), p.4-5; Labarthe, "Mission Work", p.2-5.

[31]. JME, 1930, (vol.2, pp.2021 and 102-02), 1940-41, (p.158); Bonner, P, "'Desirable or Undesirable Basotho Women?' Liquor, Prostitution and the Migration of Basotho Women to the Rand, 1920-1945", in Walker, C, (ed.), Women and Gender in South Africa, (David Philip, Cape Town, 1990).

III

There is a need to look at literacy schools that the PEMS attempted to set up in the compounds. Harries has demonstrated the symbolic and practical significance that literacy had for many African miners, but at the risk of overemphasising the success of missionary schools in the compounds.[32] There is a need to approach the Africans' fascination with literacy historically, and not assume that the attitude was the same at all times. Elphick's study of this phenomenon in South Africa's rural areas shows that the attitude of the Africans towards literacy was responsive to changes and phases in colonial contact and conquest. Wars of dispossession were accompanied by Africans' reaction against missionaries and their programmes, leading to the wearing off of the initial fascination with the written word, and stagnation and decline in school attendance, as the church was seen as the agent of colonialism. With the establishment of colonial rule, Africans' attitudes changed, literacy being regarded as a means of social mobility.[33] And the number of books sold should not be treated, as Harries does, as a critical indicator of the attitude of miners towards literacy campaigns in the compounds. Many of such campaigns, like the one that was spearheaded by the PEMS, were linked to religious conversion; there must have been many workers who responded positively to the sale of books but resisted attending literacy classes.

The state of PEMS literacy classes was very unstable for most part of the period under review. Classes were generally held between 17h30 and 20h00 after supper, and were commonly conducted by volunteers whose minimum level of education was Standard 4. It was relatively easier to get miners who would be interested in beginning a school, but it was more difficult to get a literate miner, let alone a Mosotho, who would be willing to sacrifice his leisure for such an enterprise. Some Compound Managers would be persuaded to put pupils together in one dormitory; if the number was not sufficient to fill the dormitory, it would then be increased with miners who hated alcohol. It could take an evangelist over a month trying to get hold of the Compound Manager (as they were often busy), and getting the interested "boys" moved to the same dormitory. Some groups would have up to 15 pupils. Lessons were focused on reading and writing skills, and, at least during the time of Louis Mabille, agricultural knowledge. Mabille encouraged the Basotho to return to their home, to avoid getting morally and

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[32]. Harries, Work, Culture, p.217-18.

[33]. Elphick, R, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa", in Lamar, H, and L. Thompson, (eds.), The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared, (Yale University Press, London, 1981), pp.291-92.

culturally contaminated. He was even concerned that many Basotho were learning lingua francas spoken in the compounds and locations, losing their Sesotho. Seeing that the migration of the Basotho to the mining centres was linked to the disintegration of the economy in Lesotho, he supported a call made by the rising African middle-class elements for giving priority to Basotho in the labour market in Lesotho. His emphasis on agricultural knowledge was based on the illusion that miners would dedicate their energies to farming on their return home, and never return to Babylon.[34]

There were two major objective factors that negatively affected PEMS' literacy campaigns in the compounds. Firstly, there was no adequate space in the compounds which could be used for classes; the atmosphere inside the rooms was not conducive to studying. Secondly, the number of teachers was seriously inadequate. Besides these factors, the PEMS was also to blame. Pupils were expected to pay between 1s and 1s.6d (other missionary societies were charging up to 2s.6d) during much of the 1930s, while African workers were earning about L3 a month. School fees pushed those who might have been interested away; their payment had to face competition for miners' wages from the purchasing of such items as beer, dagga, extra food, or gambling, and/or hoarding, or remitting money home. At the same time, teachers were supposed to be paid from these fees. So if some pupils delayed in paying or preferred to leave (which was very common), this meant that the volunteer teacher was not going to get his remuneration. It is not surprising that the collapse of many schools in the compounds was blamed on "lazy" teachers and the drop in attendance. Some teachers would leave on the expiry of their mine contracts, and there would then be a problem of finding a replacement, which commonly took months.[35] The other problem, perhaps the most serious one, was that missionary societies saw literacy classes as an instrument of conversion, meaning therefore that if conversion was failing such schools were also likely to suffer the same fate. Mabille was convinced that "the most real advantage of these schools for those who participate in them, is to provide them with an effective shelter against all temptations that they are subject to (on the

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[34]. JME, 1928, p.89; Leselinyana, 18 December 1925, 28 November 1930, 18 July 1934, 10 February 1928, 12 October 1932; Mochochonono, 5 September 1934, Mabille participates in a debate in the discrimination against the Basotho in employment in Lesotho. It was not uncommon for Mabille or Ellenberger, for example, to express their reservations about the political system in South Africa. Mabille even wrote to one of his friends in France asking him to arrange schools for his children, as he was worried that they were going to grow up with a supremacist mentality (see APEMS, Mf.783).

[35]. Leselinyana, 18 July 1934, 10 February 1928, 12 October 1932, 25 November 1930, 18 December 1925; JME, 1928, p.84-90.

Rand)".[36] Pupils were expected not only to accept conversion, but had also to abstain from alcohol. The situation probably improved during the 1940s when some mineowners took more active interest in the social welfare of their African workers, providing facilities not only for sport, but also classrooms, benches, chalks and blackboards. Missionary societies continued to play a role in this field of literacy, but some mines also employed their own teaching staff. Arithmetic was now being taught in addition to reading and writing, and some classes could go up to Standard 4.[37]

There is no doubt, however, that literacy had a lot of practical advantages for African miners. Literate workers could get clerical or other better-paying jobs on the mine, which provided advantages like staying in the married quarters instead of the single-sex compounds. It was a dream of many workers to get such jobs, hence competition and jealousy were not uncommon. Jingoes was forced to abandon his training as a teacher in Morija in 1915, and later left to work at Langlaagte Block B mine. The Compound Manager felt that he was too young to go underground and offered him a "desk job", but his Mosotho induna was jealous. He tried tricks which succeeded in preventing Jingoes from getting this job and had him sent underground. One of my informants had the opposite experience; he went to look for a job at Kimberley some time after World War 2, and was singled out from a crowd waiting outside the mine. Then "(t)hey gave me a pen, book, a small box, (and) a desk", but he could not write: "I was so hurt when I remembered how my father tried to send me to school, being so ignorant, I preferred to look after the animals (as a herdboy)". The association of literacy by miners with "desk", "pen" or "book", suggests that literacy was thought to provide a comfortable and better-paying job (you can sit) which was physically not demanding (comparing a pen and a book to the hard and dangerous work underground).[38]

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[36]. JME, 1928, p.89.

[37]. Leselinyana, 18 July 1934, 10 February 1928, 12 October 1932, 25 November 1930, 18 December 1925; Mochochonono, 14 September 1946.

[38]. Harries, Work, Culture, p.216-18; Moroney, S, "Mine Married Quarters: The Differential Stabilisation of the Witwatersrand Workforce, 1900-1920", in Marks, S, and R. Rathbone, (eds.), Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930, (Longman, New York, 1982), p.264-67; Jingoes, S.J, A Chief is a Chief by the People: The Autobiography of Stimela Janson Jingoes, (Oxford University Press, London , 1975), p.63; Samuel Nonyana Mokoaleli, b.1914, Thaba Bosiu, 02 July 1993.

IV

But why was the PEMS mission on the Rand failing? The central objective factor was the difficult financial situation that had been facing the Society since 1914. The Rand mission was supposed to be financed from the coffers of the Lesotho branch of the Society, and regular collections and donations from member-miners on the Rand; salaries of evangelists and, in theory, the building of the chapels and accommodation for evangelists, were supposed to come from Lesotho. The financial problem was reflected at the level of staffing and logistics. The Society depended on the DRC and, especially, the Swiss mission for chapels and other necessities, even after the building of their first church at Village Main in 1933. Louis Mabille, for example, stayed for some time at the house belonging to the head of the Swiss Mission in Johannesburg. Tumisi and Ellenberger held one of their Communions at Randfontein in 1927, using a chapel and plates belonging to the Swiss. David Patose (while he was still working as a volunteer) had to hold his services under a tree outside the mine for some time before the Swiss invited him to their chapel. (When it came to the sharing of a chapel, the arrangement still worked like during the days of Enerst Mabille). When PEMS began its work in 1922 the staff of the Swiss Mission was made up of 14 evangelists, over 100 volunteers, a white missionary and an African pastor, but PEMS only managed to have 12 evangelists in 1942. The DRC staff in the mid-1930s in the sector that was covered by Tumisi alone with his volunteers, was made up of 4 evangelists, two pastors and a number of volunteers.[39]

The survival of the Society relied on collections and fund-raising. Annual collections in Lesotho for the Rand mission which began in 1926, were usually preceded by a heavy campaign in Leselinyana, in the form of big headlines, frontpage reports on progress, and an advertisement urging Basotho to help in the mission to "save" their "children" from evil. This newspaper even ran a twelve-series history of the "Basotho on the Gold Mines" in July\August 1934, which was mainly focused on PEMS' work on the Rand. A lot of agitation also took place in the churches especially when Ellenberger or Mabille, for example, were on visit. Though these collections averaged L400 during the first few years, they began to drop due to the economic crisis in the country, reaching L196.12s.7d in 1934. The pattern of the employment of evangelists - four between 1925 and 1929 and the fifth one in 1932 - was linked to this crisis. A lodging place for an evangelist cost some L200 in 1929, and the building of a chapel for State Mines in 1935 amounted to L372, including L84 which had to come from the pockets of the miner-members

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[39]. Falk, P, The Growth of the Church in Africa, (Zondervan Publishing House, Michigan, 1979), p.171; JME, 1929, p.222-27; Leselinyana, 11 July 1934, 25 February 1927; Mochochonono, 18 June 1938; APEMS, Mf.730.

themselves. The purchase of benches, pulpits and so forth, depended on donations from miner-members and fund-raising. The shortage of staff led to the problem of distance between and within centres; evangelists had to rely on public transport and later bicycles, to cover long distances. There was also the problem of the relatively short length of stay of individual miners in the compounds, which created the problem of continuity and follow-up, especially as many miners rarely returned to the same mine after the expiry of their contracts.[40]

Compound Managers were not always as cooperative as it is sometimes assumed.[41] The attitude of mine officials changed with time. When Baker's Compound Mission "commenced the work of evangelization in the compounds in 1896 there was a very general prejudice against Mission work and not only Compound Managers but General Managers of Mines were very averse to giving any permission... Little by little however, the prejudice began to give way, and one compound after another opened its gates to us".[42] Mine officials "have found out that Mission boys are on the whole more intelligent and more trustworthy than the average heathen, and that their sober and regular habits render them more fitted for responsible positions, and try as far as the accommodation will permit to give them separate rooms for sleeping in", for holding "their prayer meetings and classes without interference by drunken or noisy compatriots".[43] Besides providing sites and venues for evangelical work, mine officials came to fund the activities of some societies. By 1912 the Anglicans were receiving an annual grant of about L655 from some mining companies, and by the 1920s the Chamber of Mines was making an annual donation of L6000 to American Board missionaries for their weekly free shows in the compounds of "carefully selected films combining instruction and entertainment".[44]

But mine officials had two major problems with missionary work in the compounds. The first problem related to the disturbing conduct of missionaries themselves (like singing while workers were asleep) and competition between their societies. It was not uncommon for Compound Managers to intervene and arbitrate in a conflict among societies in his compounds. This competition was taken seriously by church members, leading to animosities and, possibly, physical confrontations among them. Attempts to neutralise this competition resulted in the formation of the

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[40]. JME, 1930, p.308-09; Leselinyana, 27 January 1928, 11 February 1927, 21 August 1935, 31 January 1934.

[41]. See, for an example, Harries, Work, Culture, p.214.

[42]. Africa's Golden Harvest, June 1917, p.11.

[43]. Ibid.

[44]. Taylor, J.D, "The Rand as a Mission Field", International Review of Missions, (vol.25, October 1926), p.658; on the Anglicans, see Harries, Work, Culture, p.214.

South African General Missionary Conference in 1904; by 1940, about ten societies were working together in the compounds, undertaking joint visits, and sharing platforms. The second problem related to the granting of building sites to these societies. A mine official would be reluctant to do this as, according to one American missionary, "he knows it may open the way to innumerable applications from other bodies"[45]. Sometimes it took some societies over two years to have their application for a site processed; they would be moved up and down between the Compound Manager, the NAD, Director of Native Labour and the Municipality. If permission was granted, depending on the location of the mine, the society concerned would then be instructed on whether to use bricks or wood for the building. Sometimes mineowners decided on a development project that required the use of the space that was allocated to the churches, leading to the demolition of church buildings as happened to 20 churches at Randfontein in the 1930s at one of Robinson's mines there. It took two years before the affected societies (including PEMS) were compensated with another site. Zionist churches were finding it difficult in the locations to get permission and official recognition, and could not afford the cost of building sites and church buildings; they probably faced similar obstacles in the compounds, their sects operating without the knowledge of Compound Managers.[46]

Besides these objective factors and problems of logistics, was an ideological problem linked to the approach of the PEMS - a problem that had cost the Society dearly in Lesotho. PEMS, as we saw, had been presenting itself as a "Church of Basotho/Moshoeshoe", wanting to not only give itself a monopoly over the evangelisation of the Basotho but also some historical legitimacy. This myth was losing ground to the Catholics and, to a certain extend, the separatist churches in Lesotho, but PEMS took it with itself to the Rand. In one instance in 1928 Louis Mabille was said to have been addressed as "Moshoeshoe" by some Basotho miners at Geldenhuis Deep, during his visit to the mine on the eve of Moshoeshoe's Day.[47] PEMS saw itself as Jesus going after his lost flock of sheep. In one of Mabille's sermons in the compounds he compared the migration of Basotho and their eventual return home, to a soul leaving the body for heaven after death. He also spoke about the good works of Moshoeshoe during the same sermon. More than this, PEMS operatives (including evangelists and African ministers), were convinced that theirs was a "correct" Word. What was life to Basotho - life that had

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[45]. Taylor, J.D, "The Rand as a Mission Field", p.653.

[46]. Leselinyana, 25 September 1935, 24 May 1939; JME, 1934, (vol.1, p.355), 1942-45, (p.132); Falk, Growth of the Church, p.182; Sundkler, B.G.M, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, (Oxford University Press, London, 1948), pp.80-87.

[47]. Annual celebrations of Moshoeshoe's Day (12 March) had been taking place since 1919 in Lesotho (Basutoland News, 22 March 1940).

historical, socio-economic and cultural foundation and importance - was seen as a moral and cultural disorder that needed to be cured with the gospel. This fundamentally mistaken approach led to the intolerance of and antagonism towards practices that were regarded as bad or wrong.[48]

George Mabille, the son of Louis Mabille, offered a typical explanation for the failure of the Rand mission:

> Out of over 200 000 Basutos from Basutoland living in the Transvaal (he wrote in 1950), we hardly minister to 30 000, whereas in Basutoland out of five Basutos, one belongs to the Church. "Why so many lost for the kingdom?" will you ask. Because evil and sin are prevalent in those quick grown urban areas. Strong drink pulls down both the brains and bodies of thousands. Immorality and prostitution break down many families, which, in most cases, were only built up yesterday. Crime, burglaries and faction fighting are notorious at Johannesburg and it makes our heart bleed to realize that, in many cases, Basutos of Basutoland are involved in those...(his dotted lines) To those who have chosen to serve the Devil, church and religion have but a meaning of distrust.[49]

The dotted lines were possibly used to avoid using an abusive word, showing how frustrated were some missionaries in their work. Interesting to note also is that, compared to the situation prior to World War 2, when more "heathens" in the rural areas were now turning towards Christianity, the reverse was taking place in the urban centres. Some missionaries thought it easier to deal with "newcomers" to the Rand:

> The newcomer to the Rand is generally more reliable to influence; he has been cut away from his tribal surroundings, and from his heathen background, and he welcomes any message of comfort. The old-comer to the Rand is acquainted with all the tricks and evils of the place. Generally speaking, he has no time for Church or any religious matters.[50]

It is not true, as I will argue later, that the Basotho by refusing to be Christian, had no time for "any religious matters". Another common and simplistic explanation was to blame this non-responsiveness of Basotho on their love for mohobelo (traditional dance).[51]

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[48]. Leselinyana, 16 March 1928, 12 October 1932, 13 March 1928.

[49]. Mabille, G, "Spiritual Gold Digging on the Rand", BW, (vol.4, no.2, March-April 1950), p.22.

[50]. Mabille, G, "Missionary Work", p.5.

[51]. Solomon Mosunyane; Leselinyana, 1 August 1934.

This non-tolerance and arrogance significantly influenced the attitude of Basotho. One Mosotho complained in Leselinyana that PEMS evangelists were quick in attacking and condemning "wrong-doers". Often, he continued, "they have the habit of coming to the compound, make a very big noise in their evangelisation, stopping at the door (of dormitories) while those working night shift were still asleep". That is why, he explained, some Compound Managers refuse to allow missionary societies access to their compounds. He thought that evangelists needed to respect people, know the times when miners took their break, meals or changed shifts.[52]

What PEMS neglected was the positive role that beer-drinking, prostitutes, and dances, played for Basotho migrants, and the significance that miners in the compounds attached to their holidays. The Swiss missionary Creux visited the Premier Mine on one Sunday in March 1907, and after meeting his contacts:

> ...we went to a big and immense court by going through the dormitories and corridors where there were tobacco, meat, fruits, etc. on sale. What a mess and disorder! Hundreds of Bapedis were dancing to the sound of drums...[53]

His successor, Meuron, described Sunday from his experience with visiting the same mine, as a day when miners dance and sing "like during festivities in their villages".[54] "Faction fights" resulting from what were regarded as beer-drinking "orgies" on Sundays and related days in the mine compound, were quite common. As early as 1896 the mine officials were trying, together with the police, to devise ways of preventing such fights, but this phenomenon continued into the 1930s. One "faction fight" at the Premier Mine in 1910 was caused by the management's attempt to force workers to work on Sunday. African miners' determination to maintain Sunday as a holiday was also remarked by H.O. Buckle in his 1913 report on Native Grievances.[55] One PEMS minister accepted that "though these Basuto workers on the Rand get so interested in the Word of God, they take it that the usefulness of the Gospel is only to dispel their sorrows and to comfort and console them in times of need and difficulty. On days of happiness and sunshine they do not bother to go to Sunday

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[52]. Leselinyana, 5 July 1939.

[53]. Bulletin, 1907, p.160.

[54]. Ibid., 1911, p.369.

[55]. Standard and Diggers News, 31 December 1896, Moodie, T.D, "Ethnic Violence on South African Gold Mines", Journal of Southern African Studies, vol.18, no.3, 1992; Rand Daily Mail, 31 May 1910, 1 June 1910, 3 June 1910; Report of the Native Grievances Inquiry, 1913-14, U.G, 37 -'14.

services; they would rather go to location beer-halls or visit friends on a Sunday than go to church"[56].

Missionaries, in their contest for Sunday, would try to begin their visits around 10h00 before workers left for the locations or began their drinking sessions (though drinking generally began on Saturday night). But this did not work; there were many Basotho who wanted to join the church but did not want to part with beer, and there were also many others who dropped out because of this problem. It was not uncommon to have drunk miners among those present at the service; some would be drowsy or even black-out and collapse in front of the messenger of God. The problem of drinking within PEMS churches in Lesotho reached a crisis point in the 1930s, some evangelists even attending their services drunk. Calls were made to extend the branches of the PEMS temperance organisation, the Blue Cross (founded in 1885), to all parts of the country. The PEMS was under pressure to give in lest it lost a lot of its members.[57]

A problem that was to arise within PEMS churches was of members trying to develop "their" form of Christianity without breaking away. This was linked to what was seen as spiritual imperfections among the members; many of those who attended churches had little knowledge of the scripture, and paid little attention to their duties as Christians. Towards the end of the 1930s ceremonial feasts known as tafole ea bafu (table of the dead) began to take place in some PEMS stations in Lesotho. This practice was condemned as "ancestor worship" by the Church leadership, as it essentially involved paying homage to dead relatives. The other problem was of "concerts" which came to take place in PEMS chapels across the Reef and at other centres. Louis Mabille was once approached by some members in 1929 to organise a "concert" to raise money for the building of the church, but he dismissed the proposal on "moral" grounds. Around 1930, he expelled one of his volunteers, possibly the one who worked as a clerk at Driefontein, for having organised a fund-raising party (where beer was on sale) in his two-roomed house. The problem became more serious in the 1940s with some evangelists, baholo and bahlanka playing a leading role in organising these concerts. Coninck mishandled the crisis and was recalled to Lesotho in 1946, George Mabille summoned from Ivory Coast in an emergency, to replace him. Mabille's first move was to impose a total ban on concerts, but the "rebels" vowed to continue their struggle. These tensions culminated in Mabille being assaulted by some members of the congregation at Orlando during his sermon, and a bloody fight that occurred at one of PEMS' big annual services at Village Main. Services of evangelists who were regarded as puppets of the white leadership

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[56]. Selikane, "Church of Basutoland", p.10.

[57]. Mohapeloa, From Mission, p.18; JME, 1929, p.227; Verdier, T, "L'alcoholisme au Lessouto", JME, vol.1, 1930; Mphatsoe, E, "The Blue Cross Association in Basutoland", BW, vol.8, no.3, July-September 1954.

of the Church, were being deliberately disrupted. Some even had to flee for their lives; an evangelist at Orlando had to hold one of his services under the protection of 20 policemen. The situation was partially brought under control with the arrest of some of the "rebels".[58]

Beer, women (prostitutes) and dance, were more than simply forms of entertainment for Basotho (and other Africans). They expressed and confirmed group and kinship solidarity and continuity with home, and were avenues for escaping the dehumanising and alienating conditions on the mine and in the compounds. In the locations and slums, miners could visit marabi[59]shebeens; Basotho had the option of visiting urban Sotho shebeens to enjoy themselves with famo and focho [60] dances and music.[61]

More than this, one PEMS missionary was later to note that:

> (t)here are still vast realms of thought to conquer in evangelizing the Basuto on the Rand, - they still bear their fore-fathers' beliefs of old; witchcraft, ancestral spirits, and the like. If an accident befalls a young man in the shafts under-ground, he believes that his great-grand-fathers are angry with him, and are to be appeased. Such men, the mission on the Rand has tried to win over, but apparently in vain.[62]

The Basotho still had an independent view of the world - a view not compatible with Christian outlook. Charms were used by Basotho migrants for protection (against sorcerers and misfortune) and controlling the external world (like bringing luck to one). Consulting diviners for being "strengthened" for the long road to the mines, or for bringing luck to those who

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[58]. Mabille, G, Un Noire et un Blanc = Une Equipe: Temoinage a Michael Malefane par son Co-equipier George Mabille, (Paris, 1976), p.69-87; Mohapeloa, From Mission, p.18; JME, 1929, p.226.

[59]. The type of South African ghetto music which was popular by the 1920.

[60]. These types of dances and music were linked to the migrant labour system and the development of prostitution in Lesotho. Besides being sexually provocative, the dances give a greater role to women.

[61]. Coplan, In Township Tonight, p.94-101, deals with marabi, famo and focho dances and music. On the role of alcohol on the mines, see Moodie, D, "Alcohol and Resistance on the South African Gold Mines, 1903-1962", and Baker, J, "Prohibition and Illicit Liquor on the Witwatersrand, 1902-1932", in Crush, J and C, Ambler, (eds) Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1992).

[62]. Selikane, "Church of Basutoland", p.11.

wanted to become foremen or compound policemen, were quite common. One common practice in the 1930s in Lesotho was to scarify migrants around one of the eyes. Diviners could also be found in and outside the compounds.[63] Some leading PEMS members also left the Church to become diviners or join separatist churches. One Mosotho evangelist was to confess that "even our own Christians are attracted by queer, strange ways".[64]

Progress of PEMS' work was better on mines were Basotho were small in number, but difficult on those mines were the numbers were large. Christianity could also be used by some workers, as we saw, to cope with the mine situation, pretending to be pious during the week, but change immediately they leave for the locations. Sometimes, workers preparing to go on a shift would react more positively than they would on Sundays, as many of them feared working underground. But most of those who were converted in Lesotho, including ex-students from Morija, did their best to evade and dodge the missionary and his evangelists on the Rand. This resistance to conversion was not restricted to simply not coming to the meetings or services. The most common form of open resistance was to attempt to sabotage the proceedings of a service or a meeting.[65] One evangelist described the reaction of Basotho when they were visited in their rooms:

> ... (R)ight here (in the room), words of contempt and mockery are thrown at this servant of the Lord... Eventually some ask him: "Who are you, what do you want here?" He does not answer and carries on.[66]

One of my informants used to be one of the miners who had such an attitude. They did not understand what missionaries were doing there, he argues, because they themselves were there for only one thing - to work.[67] But there were more active forms of resistance; when an evangelist or missionary had gathered his group at a corner in the courtyard of the compound, one evangelist shared his experiences,

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[63]. Ashton, H, The Basuto, (Oxford University Press, London, 1952), pp. 282-316; Dieterlen, H, "La Medecine et les Medecines au Lessouto", Les Cahiers Missionaires, (no.17, 1930), especially p.24.

[64]. Malebane, "Work of the Lord", p.6; see Dieterlen, H, "La Medecine et les Medecins au Lessouto", Les Cahiers Missionaires, (no.17, 1930), and Laydevant, F, "La Sorcellerie en Basutoland", Etudes Missionaires, (vol.7, no.2, 1937).

[65]. JME, 1928, p.88; Leselinyana, 1 August 1893, 1 August 1934, 8 August 1934.

[66]. Malefane, "Work of the Lord", p.5;

[67]. Samuel Nonyana

> ...a passer-by shouts his war song, as he goes past the group. Some of our people ask him to keep silent and off he goes. He is soon followed by another who sings his own praises... . (his dotted lines) They persuade him to lower his voice. Here comes two fellows cursing each other. They restrain them. Some are playing Bantu chess (morabaraba), others dance. The evangelist preaches in the very midst of noise, clapping of hands and curses.[68]

Such behaviours, especially the playing of drums and other noisy instruments, were often targeted at disrupting the proceedings of these meetings or services: "We were announcing our meeting by moving about the courtyard of the compound, singing hymns, with our group of christians (Coninck once lamented); but young heathens, armed with their drums, also moved about the courtyard, causing a big disturbance; on this day we preached in vain".[69] Violent attacks on converts were also not uncommon; one of Baker's early converts was subject to harassment by his dormitory mates as he was no longer participating and financially contributing towards beer-drinking sessions. His books were torn, his slate smashed, and when all these failed he was prevented from going out on one of his Sunday services, but he managed to force his way out.[70]

V

Missionary work in the compounds involved, in effect, a struggle for the precious leisure time of miners, and an ideological contest between two fundamentally opposed systems of ontological and moral explanations. The eventual success of the PEMS was linked to the collapse of rural economies and urbanisation which were accompanied by the reordering of the society and social consciousness.

Many of the missionary societies which were operating in the compounds were in pursuit of the "their" African ethnic groups. The PEMS was after the Basotho, and the Swiss after the Shangaan. Baker, though he targeted all groups, was able to his exploit his knowledge of Sezulu to reach the Zulu and those who understood their language. The DRC concentrated on Africans from some parts of the Transvaal and the Free State. Those societies that were not focused like the Anglicans and the Catholic, encountered a serious language problem.

This study has shown that though mineowners benefited from the conversion of Africans to Protestantism which instilled the

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[68]. Malefane, "Work of the Lord", p.6.

[69]. JME, 1942-45, p.132.

[70]. Baker, Grace Triumphant, p.106.

workers with an ethic and discipline necessary for mine work, their relationship with missionary societies was not unproblematic. The study of the activities of the separatist churches in the compounds will likely produce interesting results.

Africans were also not passive on-lookers waiting for white preachers to bring them Christianity. The study has shown how many of them took initiative, and how key were their activities in the spread of the gospel in the compounds. The work of the African evangelists and ministers was also essential; miners related better to their African counterparts than to white missionaries. Converts with their organisations in the compounds, spiritually and materially supported each other, and developed a culture of their own. Conversion as it often involved imparting Africans with literacy skills for reading the bible, could bring promotion and benefits to miners. Some of the latter took the new religion with them to home on the expiry of their mine contracts. One Mosotho migrant from the Maluti (the mountainous eastern part of Lesotho) apparently exclaimed to his compatriots on his return from the mines:

> This is truly a mission... In Johannesburg I met a white missionary of the Protestant mission of Lesotho, who spoke Sesotho well, and again, today, back at home, in the midst of mountains, there is again a white missionary of the same mission that I met. I now believe in their work... It is a solid and true one...[71]

The spread of zionist and apostolic churches in Lesotho was primarily due to returning migrants.

The relative failure of the PEMS work in the compounds was due to objective and subjective factors. The missionaries' determination to displace the Basotho outlook of the world and replace it with a Protestant one and their intolerance of practices which were fundamental to the Sotho society, were one factor. The resistance of Basotho miners to conversion was also another element.

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[71]. JME, 1928, p.145.